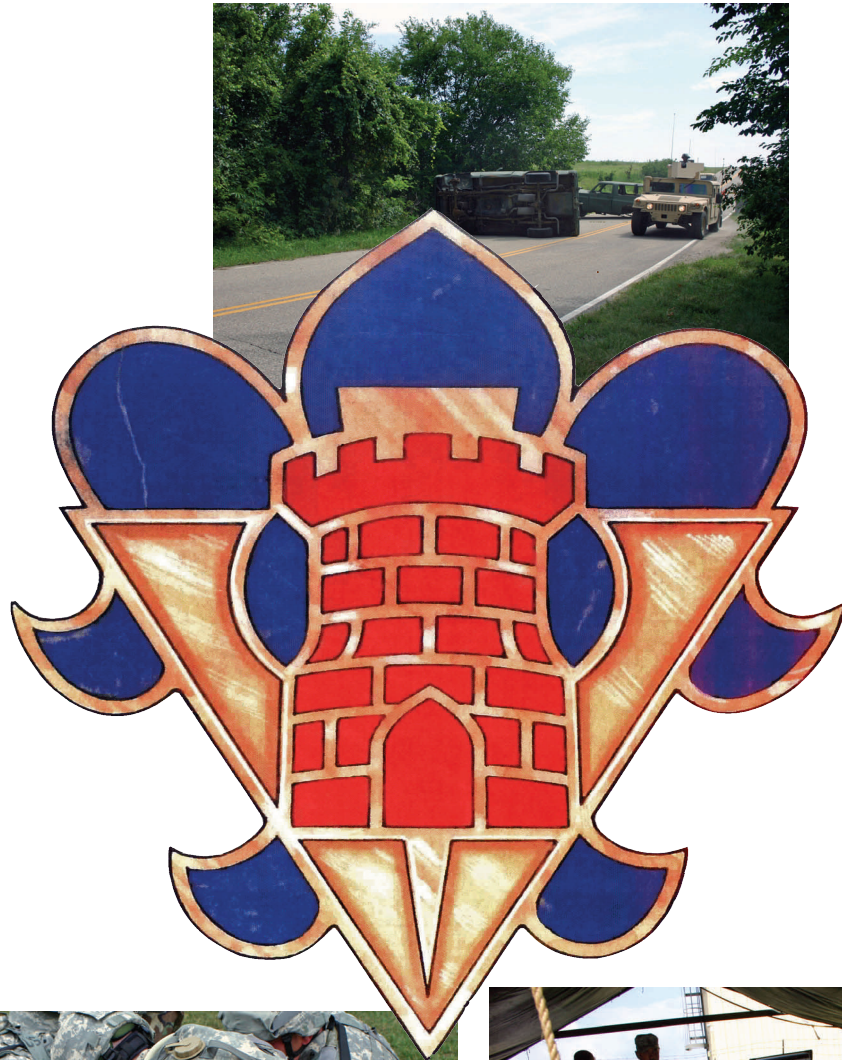


# ***DAGGER DETAILS***



***SHARPEN THE EDGE***

# Coming Next Issue:

## *Special Holiday Edition*

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Published by the Dagger Public Affairs Office



# Commanders Corner

As the last of our brigade returns home to Fort Carson, we can reflect on a “tough job well done.” Our mission at Fort Riley was the top priority of the Army – a historical and monumental mission to train the next phase of service members – advisors, that are the exit strategy for the Iraq and Afghan theaters. Our brigade worked hard and received nothing but tremendously positive feedback from all levels of command, up to the Secretary of Defense, for the great job and effort that was made to prepare our nation’s service members for their advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our nation’s leadership and media took notice of the dramatic changes our brigade contributed to the training of transition teams. None of these sacrifices go unnoticed, and the collective diligence of every Soldier left the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division with a high standard to maintain and increase. I would like to take this time to say thanks to the family members of this brigade for your contribution and support of our Soldiers. It is not easy to keep the families together during these demanding times, but know that the brigade and the nation appreciate your sacrifice and your support of our Soldiers during this latest deployment.



Looking back on Fort Riley, we know that our individual contributions were what brought us to be recognized as a “world class” training brigade. Our innovative training, our undying commitment to excellence, and our strength to push beyond our limits is clearly what sets us apart. We had no fewer than 20 distinguished visitors, all which came to see the tremendous work being done to make this mission a success. Our brigade, in collaboration with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and later, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, succeeded in consolidating training and resources at Fort Riley – building the Center of Excellence of Training for Transition Teams for the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

The idea of the Fort Riley Training Mission was presented on the office stationery of Maj. Gen. Hardy and had developed, in a few short months, into the dynamic, relevant training platform unequalled by no other training center. There was no template, no standard, no “cut and paste” for us to reference. Our Soldiers developed the idea and built an incredible model for future training to be referenced. We can be sure the results of the hard work, long hours and great ideas of all our Soldiers will long be lauded by all for the impressive training venue developed at Fort Riley.

We are in the holiday season, and I wish that everyone will spend quality time with their families. We cannot forget what it means to be a part of this great nation and the freedoms that we have because of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines. The holidays are a time of celebration of our nation, and the freedoms we have to celebrate our religious and spiritual holidays. I would ask you to keep our 12 deployed Soldiers in your prayers during this holiday season as we eagerly await their safe return.

As we rejoice in the reuniting of family and friends, we must always think about safety. As you celebrate during the holidays, remember what it would be like if there was someone missing from your party due to a lack of caution on their part. All leaders, Soldiers and family members are an integral part of the success of our mission. Deploying units depend on us to train them like they are going to fight, making them ready to deploy. We must diligently take care of ourselves and our family to execute our mission. Please ensure you have adequate controls in place during the holiday period. One loss is too great.

The future is around the next corner, and we will be sending battalions to Fort Bliss, Texas, and back to Fort Riley, Kansas. We will have additional missions without doubt. We are a nation at war and our nation is committed to mission success in Iraq and Afghanistan. Take the time to recharge, take time with your family and enjoy the great things that you have received. There is nothing greater than the determination, courage and honor of an Army Strong Soldier of the United States of America. There is no greater charge than to be a defender of this great nation.

God Bless, Happy Holidays and “Sharpen the Edge”

# Transition Team Training brings Iraq to Kansas

By Sgt Lisa Litchfield , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

The temperature soared to over one hundred degrees and the summer sun beat down on the earth scorching the villagers, the buildings, and the team of Soldiers patrolling on the nearby dirt road. The scene could have been taking place in Iraq rather than the simulated village of Al Hawaej at Fort Riley, Kan. and that is exactly the point of this exercise.

This Military Transition Team of Soldiers is patrolling the village and conducting building searches as part of the theater immersion training they are receiving from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division (TSB) from Fort Carson, Colo. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde., 91<sup>st</sup> Div. (TSB) has been training groups of MITT Soldiers since 1 June and will continue until 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade can take over and continue training more teams of Soldiers.

Capt. Cody Beck, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde., 91<sup>st</sup> Div. (TSB), is the officer in charge of the exercise. "The main objective of the exercise is for the teams to understand moving in an urban environment, and entering and clearing a building with civilians and insurgents," said Beck.



Beck and his instructors have all served time in Iraq. "We've walked the patrols and dealt with the Iraqi Army as well as civilians on the battlefield," he said. "We try to create the most realistic training."

During this exercise, teams are required to conduct a patrol through the village and search all buildings. Once they enter a building they have to clear all rooms, stairways, hallways, floors and balconies.

"Most Iraqi houses have furniture, food and trash all over the place. What Soldiers need to understand is how all of that is going to affect their mission," said Beck. "It's going to affect entering the house and dealing with the civilians and insurgents. There is also a lot of small arms fire that comes from balconies because insurgents can see Soldiers coming up the roads," he said.

As the Soldiers enter the town they encounter contracted role players. These role-players help the Soldiers learn to deal not only with Iraqi civilians, but with insurgents as well. The team has the tough job of determining who is a threat and who is not.

According to Beck, "the toughest job for a Soldier is to be able to separate a combatant from a non-combatant. It's something you can't write a manual about." Beck added that these skills are developed using instinct and by continuous training and practice. It is important that you learn "how to deal with your civilians and insurgents using interpreters and questioning to be able to rout out the enemies," he said.

After clearing and securing the buildings and the village, the Soldiers conduct an after action review to discuss what they did well and what they need to work on.

One of the trainees, Sgt. Lewis, said, "It was a good experience and great training for any Soldier to go through. This as close as it is going to get to the real thing. The more and more we go over this the better and better we get. If this is what we have to do to get Soldiers home then I am willing to do this over and over again."

Maj. Carroll, transition team leader, said, "this is the most important thing we do out here." said "Building relationships with our Iraqi counterparts while in Iraq is the most important thing we are going to do. Running realistic training like this and running into Iraqi role players is key," he said.

Maj. Carroll was pleased with the accomplishments of his team following the village scenario. "Our interaction with the civilians on the battlefield is exactly where it should be," he said.

Beck said the building clearing was the first step in collective training for the squads and teams working together as a cohesive unit.



The Soldiers will be able to put their team building skills to the test when they incorporate all blocks of their training into a three-day Mission Readiness Exercise at the conclusion of the training cycle.

Beck said this training “is just a small but important piece of a much bigger operation.”



### **Military Transition Team Cycle One Soldiers hone their Warrior skills**



# Foreign troops aide Dagger Brigade in refining IED training

By Sgt. Zachary Shumway , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

Two members of the improvised explosive device task force in Iraq recently visited Fort Riley's military transition team training compound on Camp Funston to help refine IED training for deploying Soldiers.

Both Lt. Cmdr. Steve Bliss, of the Royal Australian Navy, and Sgt. Maj. Stephen Thorn, of the British Army, are members of Task Force Troy, the coalition's primary organization responsible for responding to the IED threat in Iraq. In order to help coalition Soldiers stay ahead of insurgent tactics, Bliss and Thorn visited the military transition team training facility run by 2<sup>nd</sup> "Dagger" Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Training Division, to update and assess IED training.

"Training the trainer is the best way to get the word out," Bliss said. He said because the American force in Iraq is so large it is impractical for a few IED experts to train the entire force. Instead he notes, the best way to disseminate counter IED methods is to train Soldiers ranking from specialists and sergeants who will continuously spread counter IED methods.

"Our mission here is to assess and evaluate the IED training that 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade is doing to ensure American Soldiers receive top rate training before their insertion in theater," Thorn said.

1-361<sup>st</sup> Engineer "Redhawk" Battalion is the Dagger Brigade's primary element responsible for IED training on Fort Riley. "Redhawk's" Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Maison said, "Task Force Troy conducted a mobile training team visit to review our program and how we train. During this review [we] exchanged ideas and lessons learned to better prepare us to perform our jobs and to enhance our communication skills."

Maison said that both Bliss and Thorn were extensively experienced in dealing with IEDs. "We are using the expertise of the Soldiers who visited us to gain another level of certification, thus, enhancing our ability to conduct training," he said.

Task Force Troy uses a mainly United Kingdom troops because of their previous experiences with IEDs, Thorn said. "American experience with IEDs is in its infancy, whereas the British Army has had decades of experience fighting the Irish."

Thorn has completed two tours in Iraq and is currently deployed on his third one. He says the greatest threat facing Coalition Forces in Iraq is posed by improvised explosive devices, and he believes his expertise in locating IEDs before they go off can limit that threat.

Bliss said Coalition Forces continue refining their training and awareness to stay ahead of the new threats posed by updated insurgent tactics. "We are teaching the whole spectrum of IED technology because not all IEDs are the same," Thorn said. "The goal is to make sure the counter-IED operator knows what to do and how to do it when he sees and IED."

The information provided by Task Force Troy will augment "Redhawk" Battalion's ability to train Soldiers deploying to Iraq, Maison said. "The information we received from Task Force Troy was very valuable and will enhance the quality of training we conduct here at Fort Riley."

"I think that 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's training is excellent. This is the type of training that should have been established years ago as a proactive program to counter the IED threat," Bliss said.

As the War against Terrorism continues the Dagger Brigade and Task Force Troy work together relentlessly training Soldiers to meet the challenges of an ever changing battlefield.



# Bikers Rally for Wounded Soldiers Fund

By Sgt Lisa Litchfield , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

It began with a casual dinner conversation. It will end with the Flint Hills Freedom Run, a motorcycle rally in Wamego, Kan. July 22 to benefit the Fort Riley Wounded Soldiers Fund.

Todd Nutsch and Tate Fisher, local businessmen and bike enthusiasts, are two of the driving forces behind the freedom run. While neither has personally served in the military, they have close ties with families and friends who have.

A conversation with his sister-in-law, occurring while his brother Mark was serving with Army Special Forces in Afghanistan, which initially started him thinking that there should be something more out there for wounded Soldiers Nutsch said. It wasn't until he met Master Sgt. Brian Wells (Ret.) that he realized there was.

Wells, an active member of the AUSA, explained to Nutsch about the Fort. Riley Wounded Soldiers Fund. The fund, established in 2003, is a non-profit, charitable fund that provides financial assistance to injured Soldiers in times of financial distress. Since 2003, the fund has provided more than \$100,000 in grants to wounded Soldiers. Most Soldiers don't know that the fund offers a \$250 stipend to any wounded Soldier removed from the theater of operation, Wells said. Further financial assistance is provided on a need basis, all the Soldier has to do is apply, he said.

This was the link he was looking for as he put the conversation with his sister-in-law and the conversation with Wells together Nutsch said. He described his feelings of wanting to do something, especially since 9/11, to show support for those who were serving. The idea for the bike rally was born.

"While we may have had the initial idea, it's been a lot of factors outside of us that have taken this to where it is now," Nutsch said.

One of those factors was meeting Staff Sgts Nic Wetherill, Jason Briglin and Tim Johnson, all three members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division "Dagger Brigade" currently stationed at Fort. Riley.

The sergeants met Nutsch and Fisher while riding and started spending time with them. I got involved because it is a good cause and we keep good company," Johnson said.

Nutsch likes having the military members involved. "These guys have had service overseas in the sandbox. It gives a heightened sense of awareness of what we're doing when they are out there with us," he said. People always think that Tate and I are in the military, Nutsch said. Since we aren't, it is good to have the guys out with us that can give a face to the mission, he said.

Part of the intent for this rally, Nutsch said, was to come up with a new fundraiser for the fund. The previous fundraiser, yellow magnetic 'Support Our Troops' ribbons, has become less viable as the market has been saturated with similar products. The possibility of an annual event isn't being looked at until this first rally is complete.

"It will depend on how good of a job we've done on logistics and planning," Nutsch said. "The event needs to be a success for the city of Wamego," he added.

Planning and promotion for this event has taken "hundreds upon hundreds of hours," according to Todd. "Of course," he added, "planning would insinuate forethought."

Tate nodded in agreement. "It's hard to plan something when it's exploding in front of you and you're just trying to chase after it," he said.

The term "exploding" at first glance seems to be a little strong, but it's hard to come up with a better term when two businessmen are able to raise more than \$12,000 in less than 20 days.

"It's amazing the response people have had," Nutsch said. "Our posters have made it all the way from Nebraska to Colorado, to Missouri."



"The biker community is a very charitable community," Nutsch said. He added that this rally was significant because, "there's never been anything like this in this part of the country." Nutsch and Fisher are optimistic that this event will be a success and translate into an annual fundraiser for the Wounded Soldiers Fund.

While some may hear the term "motorcycle rally" and automatically think muscles, tattoos and beer, Nutsch and Fisher aren't worried about a perception that bikers are a tough crowd.

"Bikers today, all you have to do is look at the price tag," Nutsch said. Fisher agreed with him. "There are more CEOs at Sturgiss than outlaw bikers," he said.

Nutsch said it was Fisher's idea to bring in a exhibition stunt bike team to help diversify the crowd as well. He said that events like this tend to get "pigeon-holed" as being only for Harley riders or for "cruiser" bikes. The hope for this rally is for a wide variety of riders to come and enjoy the event.

The rally is set up as a "poker run" with the best hand at the end of the day winning a cash prize. Nutsch said that the Christian Motorcycle Association, headed by Chuck Bramhill, has taken full charge of the poker hands.

"The amount of labor they are donating is huge," Nutsch said. The CMA will man 10 stations at each stop during the rally. They are employing a secure, "no cheat" system that will ensure that everyone has a fair chance for the winning hand at the end of the rally, he added.

During the poker run, which begins and ends in Wamego, the participants, "whether 200 or 2,000 will move as one group," Nutsch said. "Local, county and state law enforcement will be involved in holding traffic as the group moves from one station to the next," he said.

Nutsch stresses that while the rally is a time to get out and enjoy the companionship and camaraderie of riding together, the important thing to remember is that this is for the Soldiers.

"This is something they [the civilian population] can do to help" he said. This fund is out there, we want people to know that it is available, and we want to raise awareness as well as raise funds, he explained.

For more information on the Fort Riley Wounded Soldiers Fund visit their Web site at [www.ausa.org/riley](http://www.ausa.org/riley) or call Wells at (785) 458-2824. Information on the Flint Hills Freedom Run can be found at [www.flinthillsfreedomrun.com](http://www.flinthillsfreedomrun.com).



SSG Jason Briglin, SSG Nic Wetherill, SSG Tim Johnson, and Brent Gilbert pose at Country Stampede with the motorcycle that was raffled off for the Wounded Soldiers Fund. The motorcycle was eventually won by SGT LaRay Demers, HHC, 5th Armored Brigade.

# Transition Teams Begin Mission Specific Training

By Sgt Lisa Litchfield , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

Transition Team One, cycle one of the Fort Riley Training Mission, marked another first as they began their specialized mission training with large truck familiarization here at Fort Riley, Kan. on July 11.

According to LTC Lowell Preskitt, S-3 for the 2nd Brigade, 91st Training Division (Training Support), all transition team Soldiers complete 39 core tasks and then each team begins the training which is modified specific to the type of mission the team will perform in country.

Transition Team One is designated as a Motor Transportation Regiment Transition Team and is the first team to ever receive this familiarization training with the large trucks.

Capt. Michael Volpe, Combat Driving Chief and Senior Trainer for the 2nd of the 365th Logistical Support Battalion, described the training as a three-day block of specialized immersion training designed to address the mission requirements of the transportation team when they arrive in theater.

With new training there are sometimes challenges and Volpe acknowledged that this training mission was no different. The main challenge, he said, was getting the necessary equipment to properly train the Soldiers.

Volpe credits the 89th Regional Readiness command with helping to overcome that particular challenge by supplying vehicles from their equipment concentration site here to support the training mission.

According to Volpe, the team is trained on two different models of 2 ½ ton trucks that they can expect to see again once they arrive in Iraq. One model is a 1970s edition without power steering or power assist and the second is an upgraded version with power steering and power assist. Additionally, the team also trains on a 5-ton cargo truck and a 5-ton tractor-trailer.

Instruction during the three day course includes how to properly perform a PMCS on each of the four different vehicles as well as some of the common maintenance problems associated with the everyday wear on the four different vehicles.

"This training gives them the knowledge to better themselves at taking care of these vehicles," said Volpe.

As Preskitt mentioned, this specialized training occurs toward the end of the training cycle and Soldiers are anxious to get down to mission specifics.

"It has been great to learn things specific to what we are going to do in theater during our last week of training," said Capt. Christopher Tramontana, head of transportation and maintenance for the team. "We are learning exactly what we will be doing over there."



**This transition team is diverse in their job specialties. We have Infantry officers, Ordnance officers and Noncommissioned officers of various branches. These Soldiers will be working with the Iraqi Motor Transportation Regiment which is the equivalent of a U.S. Division Support Command.**

**Capt. Michael Volpe**



Tramontana added that the trainers have shown the team how to take care of the vehicles if something were to happen to the vehicles while the team is in theater, and the team is confident in their abilities to perform the necessary tasks.

"I volunteered for this mission," Tramontana said. "The training we have received is great. They have listened to what we have to say and taught us things we wanted to know about the trucks."

"I am really looking forward to going over there, Tramontana added. "I am chomping at the bit to go."

Tramontana was appreciative of the fact that the trainers not only have a great deal of experience to share, but that they are really receptive to the current team's ideas about the training as well.

"We are using lessons learned from the Soldiers currently in theater in our training," Tramontana said. "And now, the new class will have the lessons learned from our training and in theater and the teaching and training will only get better and better."

Instruction during the three day course includes how to properly perform a PMCS on each of the four different vehicles as well as some of the common maintenance problems associated with the everyday wear on the four different vehicles.





# Female Soldiers Break New Ground on Transition Teams

By Sgt Lisa Litchfield , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

Two volunteered and two were selected at the branch level, but the end result was the same. Four females in transition team cycle four at Fort Riley became the first females to be placed on a Motor Transport Regiment team.

Master Sgt. Katriana Baker, Delta Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Forward Support Battalion, volunteered with her branch manager for this mission.

"They [branch] called back. They said, 'Congratulations, you're going on a MiTT team. You're the first female to go.' They kind of told me some things to look out for, what I needed to do to prepare myself to come, as far as weapons training, and stuff to get online. That's how I ended up here," Baker said.

Although she didn't have any worries about the ability to accomplish her mission, Baker said she was glad she wasn't alone.

"I was glad when I saw other females' names on there. Not that I would have had a problem being the only female but it makes things a little easier because then it's not just all eyes focused on me."

Baker had a personal reason for requesting a tour in Iraq: her Soldiers. As a drill sergeant, Baker didn't want to send her troops somewhere she herself hadn't gone.

"It's okay to serve in the garrison environment, but I'm more of a type of a person that I don't want my soldiers to do something that I haven't done. I don't want to tell you 'Hey you go to Iraq, and I'm going to sit here and wait for you. When you get back, you tell me about it.' I want to get out there and do it... then we can sit back and talk about it," she said.

Returning to Iraq for her third tour, but in her first rotation as a transition team member is Capt. Latrice Davis, also with Delta Co., 101<sup>st</sup> FSB.

Like Baker, Davis isn't concerned about the attention focused on these few female Soldiers as they conduct their training.

"Soldiering is soldiering where I am from. Get out there, find out who your team leaders are going to be, meet your team and come prepared with an open mind and be flexible," she said.

Both Baker and Davis expressed confidence in the training that they had received from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division (Training Support) trainers and in their team members.

"I'm confident in the training that we've had. My team and I work well together. It's just going to take us getting in there and meeting our unit and making those connections and getting things accomplished," Davis said.

Baker agreed adding that she told herself, "Okay, they're going to teach me what I need to know to be ready to go over there and do this mission. So, I just kind of opened up my mind for whatever they had for me and asked a whole lot of questions."

Teamwork and training were also recognized as steps to success for Baker. "The training I have gotten here has been good so it has built my confidence up. We have a good team. If we say we got it, they step back and let us get it. They don't baby us. They treat us like equals," she said.

Also joining Baker and Davis are Capt. Myrta Crespo and Capt. Chrissy Acojedo, both with Delta Co., 101<sup>st</sup> FSB.



Capt. Latrice Davis and a member of her team do a by the book PMCS of one of their team trucks

Crespo and Acojedo are both transportation officers who said they were glad to be back to their “roots.”

“It’s a great feeling to be back in your business,” said Crespo. “It’s a challenge. It was a challenge when I got here at first, now I feel a whole lot more comfortable, going back to the soldier business and being able to be where you really wanted to be at the beginning.”

Acojedo compared the preparation for deploying as part of a transition team to that of a sports team where each person has to find their role and decide what they are going to bring to the team as a whole.

“I feel we have a pretty close knit group. It’s like a sports team. I’ve played sports all my life. Once you first get to know each other, it’s a little rough. You go through your rough patches because you don’t know who each other are. Once you get into that mode where you gel, that’s the most important part of the teamwork aspect and here that’s what it is. It’s a team,” she said.

The fact that so many people seemed interested in the fact that this team was the first with females surprised but didn’t bother these Soldiers, they said. They added they were confident that as they showed their abilities the attention would fade and life would return to business as usual.

“I feel that we get a lot of eyes on, a lot of people turn around and look like, man, that’s a female. I just know that they gave me a job, and I’m going to do it to the best of my ability,” Baker said.

Crespo agreed adding, “Get rid of that fear that we’re the first females and we’re not going to be welcome. I think we can make the change. I think we can make the difference once we get on the ground. You have to be positive, motivated and looking forward to do that and take the mission.”

Although their cultural awareness training and previous deployment experience has shown the Iraqis to be resistant to females, Davis has a plan for that too.

“In the beginning, as females we are sort of sitting back and let our male counterparts pave that road and build the rapport with our unit and then we’ll kind of ease our way in so we can do our specific jobs in our element,” Davis said.

This is the third tour for Davis, and she knows that history and past performance will have an effect on the mission.

“The fact that we’ve been over there for the last three years I think that makes it a little bit easier as well because they’re used to the American forces there. They know what our culture is like. We know what their culture is like so we’re starting to integrate a little bit better. I foresee some problems, but I think they’ll mesh out fairly quick,” she stated.

Getting ready for her second deployment to theater, Acojedo also had her take on the resistance. “That’s just another obstacle that you just need to work on, to overcome so it’s something that we’re going to face. Yes, we know that, for those of us who have been deployed we already know that. You know, it’s something we already experienced so it’s not something that we can’t handle.”

Baker agreed with the assessments Davis and Acojedo had provided and offered her own take on the situation. Although she herself has not been in theater yet, her experience as a drill sergeant has taught her to take a “wait and see” approach to unit integration.

“I think the biggest thing though is once we get there, establishing good rapport. I think once that rapport is established, that although we are female, they’ll have a somewhat idea of where we’re coming from. They’ll begin to build some respect from them for us based on that,” she stated.

Professionalism and respect would also go a long way in developing relationships according to Baker. “As long as we’re professional and we maintain that professionalism throughout the time that we’re dealing with them, I think it’ll be a little easier as long as we don’t go in demanding so much from them. Even with the males, it just a matter



Capt. Myrta Crespo familiarizes herself with her vehicle during PMCS training



of getting good rapport, establishing, going from there,” she said.

The Soldiers all agreed that at the end of the day, it wasn't whether or not you were male or female. It wasn't whether or not you like where you were or what your job was. The important thing was that you accomplished your mission and performed to the best of your ability.

Acojedo summed it up for the team. “The most important thing is that you as an individual must try your 110 percent every day all the time and that's what you have to focus on. If you let all of the outside things get to you then that 110 percent will go down slowly to 100, to 90, to 75.”

She added, “The most important thing is you keep your head in the game and you keep

Members of the LSBN Drivers Training team discuss the progress of the MTR Transition Team



Master Sgt. Katrina Baker works on engine part identification with SSG Cool, LSBN



Safety First! Trainers provide ground guides out of the motorpool for Transition Team members.





# Public Works Exposure Enhances Sailor Skills

By Sgt Lisa Litchfield , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

A typical naval deployment usually means that a sailor boards a ship, begins his mission and only sets foot on land for liberty or where the mission is complete. The Sailors training in transition team cycle three at Fort Riley are not preparing for a typical naval deployment.

Eighteen Sailors are currently being trained as the Navy's first Transition Team members and are preparing for roles in Garrison and Regional Support Units. These units will be instrumental in the Iraqi ability to rebuild their country according to Capt. Aaron Curtis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division (Training Support).

According to Curtis, all these Sailors recently completed their functional training for this role, and that training included touring the water and sewage treatment plants in Junction City, as well as the Electrical Plant at Kansas State University.

Curtis noted this training was crucial for giving the Sailors "first hand experience of looking at what an operating, real life, hands on water treatment plant is." He said "when they do go to Iraq they will be able to use that skills set and helping to improve the infrastructure there".

Sailors bring a unique experience base to this deployment Curtis explained. Although the land based portion is unfamiliar, the infrastructure work is something that they do regularly aboard their ships.

"Inherent to the typical skills of a sailor they are already used to working with water, and purifying water out on ships and different things so a lot of times they have more skills than a typical soldier would, just in their basic training," said Curtis.

Curtis added, "A lot of them [Sailors] have already had skill sets and experience available to them so when they get here they are already asking questions."

Commander William Hesse, former deputy director for Damage Control and Fire Protection at Naval Sea Systems Command and a current Transition Team leader, identified some of the skills the Navy possesses for this mission.

"A ship is its own city so we have to make our own water. We have to make our own electricity, we have to take care of our own sewage. We have large distilling plants on the ship that we make salt water into potable water. I was telling one of the tour guides, we think in scales of thousands of gallons whereas now we're talking in scales of millions of gallons a day so the theory is very, very close. It's just the application now is on a much broader scale," he said.

As far as challenges go, Hesse was quick to say that the difference was mainly focused on being on dry land as opposed to being based on the ship.

"Well, I think that the first thing was just overcoming the uniqueness of it. For example, when we would deploy on a ship you know, the ship goes as one. We really don't have to bring a lot of stuff with us but now we're finding that we're getting all the gear issued to us and having to go out there. That's really the uniqueness and the culture change but once you get over that, a deployment is a deployment," he said.

According to Curtis, preparing to advise the Iraqi's and help them with their utilities is critical to the attitudes of the people there.



Navy Transition Team members visit the water treatment plant in Junction City, Kansas

The level of infrastructure that is up and working has a direct correlation to the insurgency there and how the local populace feels Curtis explained.

"If they have more electricity not just intermittent electricity, if they have decent water, and if they have just a few basic utilities, you'll find those areas have, well, it's been my experience I should say, that they have a lower percentage of insurgency in that area," Curtis added.

Curtis also noted that one major tactic of the insurgency is to "bring discredit upon fledgling government they would blow up and sabotage the local utilities and just say look, they're not doing anything for us."

According to Hesse, approximately 80 percent of these transition team Sailors have trained in the engineering field, and they realize how critical this mission is for the training of Iraqis.

"I think the importance of this [tour] is showing us how the infrastructure here back in the United States works. When we get over to the forward operating bases where we are going to be at, we can see how it is supposed to work, see what they have and then hopefully put the two pieces together to get a functional system," said Hesse.

"Once we get over there, getting ingrained and making progress and giving the Iraqi people some stabilization that they haven't enjoyed, I think once we get the stabilization and power and water distribution as well as with medical, I think that will go a long way to curbing the insurgency type activity," he added.



Commander Hesse asks mission relevant questions of a power plant employee at K-State University

Seeing the way the plants operated was beneficial to the teams according to Hesse. The differences in treatment at the water plant in Junction City in comparison to a shipboard system were noted by the Sailors.

"Seeing the larger scale, the different treatment techniques that they use, we use treating with bromine, they're treating with chlorine, chloride, so some things that we don't usually do they're dealing with. Getting to understand why they do it was very beneficial," said Hesse.

The boiler system at K-State was also informational for the Sailors and let them know in advance what sort of challenges they might come up against in country.

"The uniqueness about this plant, this is very similar to what we have on the ships but the challenges we're going to have with any boiler system it's a very temperamental system so you have to always stay ahead of it with your testing and analysis of the feed water," said Hesse.

"[It] is going to be a challenge to instill that kind of discipline into the Iraqi standards," he added. "Also looking at some of the pictures I've seen of some existing plants over there if you look at this plant, how sterile the environment is, that too is going to be a challenge. But I think we'll be up to it, and we'll get it done," he said.

Curtis stressed the importance of this training and advising role in the exit strategy for the United States.

"Yes, the key for us to leave Iraq is for the Iraqis...for them to do everything themselves because once they are autonomous, that's the criteria for success for us."



Sailors finished their utilities tour at the Junction City Sewage Treatment Facility

# MiTT Training Saves Life

By Staff Sgt. Alyn-Michael Macleod, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

A recent improvised explosive device attack in Iraq was not a deadly occurrence thanks to training received here at Fort Riley.

Military Transition Team graduate and team leader, Maj. Steve Carroll, sent an email back to his trainers at 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division (Training Support) thanking them for the training he and his team received at Fort Riley. Training he attributes to saving their lives during the IED attack.

Anti-Iraqi forces wasted no time in giving the first MiTT team from Fort Riley a chance to put their training to the test. On their second day in country, Carroll and his team were conducting an area orientation beside a canal when their convoy was struck by an IED.

Carroll writes, "Five seconds later the vehicle 40 meters in front of me carrying my brothers literally disappeared. All I saw and felt was a huge explosion where the vehicle had just been. When the smoke cleared a few seconds later, the M1114 was gone. The explosion was so tremendous that it lifted the M1114 into the air, sent it another 20 feet forward and left."

To the left of the convoy was the canal and Carroll said he feared the worst for his team members.

"The M1114 slid off the road and fell into the canal upside down," he wrote, "I thought they were all dead."

Training that transition teams receives is "theater specific, tough, realistic and hands-on" according to Col. Raymond Lamb, commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde., 91<sup>st</sup> Div. (TS) and fortunately for this team, they were well trained and well practiced.

Carroll explains in his e-mail, "Here is where the 'training pays off' comes in. I will explain by battle drill taught, developed and practiced at Fort Riley."

The first thing that the team did, despite the urge to move immediately, was to pause and look for a secondary IED while calling in their report to higher. Carroll called the wait "agonizing" but understood that it was necessary to prevent further damage to vehicles or personnel.

Following the IED search and report, the team quickly moved into their immediate action recovery operation. Carroll said his team performed instinctively and executed the operation without hesitation just as they had been instructed by their 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade trainers.

Sgt. Michael Lewis, the team medic, "did a 100 meter dash, per SOP, to the site and with the help of the tactical commander moved into the canal to extract our brothers," according to Carroll.

Carroll writes, "(Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class) Diggs had enough wits left to execute the gunner's roll over drill and drop inside the vehicle before it flipped. Despite water rising over their heads (Capt. Kim was completely submerged and holding his breath) all crew members executed the roll over drill and were able to self-extract. By the way, each of them was also wearing their seatbelts, probably saving them from severe injury or death."

The injured soldiers were evacuated and received medical care for minor injuries while the rest of team remained in place to conduct cordon search and to recover the damaged vehicle and sensitive items according to the report sent by Carroll. These skills are also taught here during MiTT training and Carroll closed his report by saying, "thanks for the great training!"



# Reserve battalion conducts MiTT Training

By Sgt. Zachary Shumway , 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

Army Reserve Soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> "Roughriders" Battalion, 360<sup>th</sup> Combat Support / Combat Service Support Regiment, deployed for two weeks to Fort Riley during their Annual Training cycle to sustain their training techniques and assist in training Military Transition Teams.

Roughriders' deployment is the culminating event in a year long training cycle designed to support parent unit 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division, lead training brigade for the MiTT mission on Camp Funston, Fort Riley.

The Roughriders' assistant operations officer, Maj. Kim Johanek said, "Our unit is very excited to be out here training. We started preparing for this mission back in October and continued training each consecutive drill weekend."

Maj. Gregory Wooten, the Roughriders operations officer, said the year long training cycle included a trip to the Utah Testing and Training Range last October. There, the battalion practiced running combat patrol live fire and practice exercise lanes. In April and May this year the Roughriders were at the Dougway Proving Grounds. Here, they improved their convoy practice lane skills which include reacting to improvised explosive devices and ambushes.

According to Wooten, the Salt Lake City based battalion was unable to get some of the necessary training it needed because they are so far away from any large Army base. "Our first week we got here we spent getting training that is harder for us to get at our home station. We got training on Blue Force Tracker, Counter-IED technology, Combat Life Saver and Crew Served Weapons Ranges," said Wooten.

Johanek noted the importance of training on the specific tasks so the battalion could not only improve their skills, but could see how the MiTTs are training. He said, "It makes you a better trainer to know what the people you are training are being taught."

Following their week of specialized training, the Roughriders battalion became the trainers. They began by training MiTT Soldiers on Convoy Patrol Live Fire and Practice Exercise Lanes. Johanek explained the difference saying, "this is the first time we have been able to train another unit. When we trained previously, we just trained internally and it's hard to get experience."

The Roughriders have spent this training year focusing on battalion level training but according to unit leadership, that concept will change for 2007. The plan for 2007 is to "break it down into the team levels," Johanek said. These smaller teams would then take the "training we have learned and continue with it so we can send that team to support a U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard unit," he said.

Wooten said that the training being done here will improve Roughrider Soldiers and give them a basic knowledge of what transition teams will see when they go into theater. He said, "We are trying to develop our Soldiers to enhance that combat patrol live fire packages we send out."

"What I think is so exciting about this training is that it is our first opportunity to train people going to Iraq," Johanek said. "This training gives us validity to train the units we have back on our drill weekend," he added.

Johanek said the unit would continue to refine training techniques learned here when they returned to Salt Lake City. Their focus during upcoming drill weekends will remain on convoy live fire exercises as the Roughrider mission to train deploying units continues.



LTC Marc VanOene explains the Roughrider mission to Wall Street Journalist Greg Jaffe

## Dagger Brigade Soldier bring experience and passion to MiTT training

Article By Dagger Task Force Public Affairs

FORT RILEY, KS—Training Military Transition Teams for their upcoming deployments in Iraq is not a job for the faint of heart. It requires a special breed of battle hardened veterans like Master Sgt. David Shindel.

Shindel is an Army Reservist and a two time veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He volunteered on both OIF trips saying, "I volunteered for Desert Storm but wasn't able to go. I didn't want to miss my chance to fight in this one."

During his time in Iraq, Shindel said he served on a Quick Reaction Force that provided internal and external security for U.S. forward operating bases. He also escorted Civil Affairs personnel, reacted to insurgent attacks on U.S. positions and conducted Improvised Explosive Device patrols.

Having just returned from his second deployment in 2005 he joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division, known as the "Dagger" Brigade to train Soldiers headed to Iraq. Being in a training brigade allowed him to "train the guys going to fight the next phase of the war," Shindel said.

Although the 91<sup>st</sup> Division does not deploy en masse to theater, large portions of its Soldiers have already served at least one tour and the division deploys small teams of advisors. Shindel feels serving in theater makes all the difference to the Soldiers he trains.

Even though he has a job as a cook, Shindel feels the Soldiers react well from him because he has been in theater. "Having served in theater validates me as a trainer in their eyes and they will listen to what I tell them because I have been there." Shindel said.

Shindel joined the Dagger Brigade at Fort Riley, Kansas as they were setting up the MiTT mission in June. Here, seasoned veterans like Shindel, train U.S. transition teams on the fundamentals of how to teach the Iraqi Military and Security Forces how to operate. MiTT training immerses Soldiers, Airmen and Navy Personnel in theater specific situations where they learn basic customs and language skills, combat reactions and other basic skills to prepare them for their deployment.

Shindel's day starts before the sun rises, with a trip to the ranges. "There isn't a lot of time for yourself in this job. The success of the teams I train in large part depends on me and what I can teach them. I go to all the training to make sure the transition teams are getting the training they need. I evaluate what it is that they do and show them what we learned in theater works better," he said.

Shindel said in a somber voice, "It's a demanding job to be a MiTT trainer. It's hard on you, hard on the trainees and hard on your family." He said he hadn't spent much time at home in the past four years. "Between two year long trips to Iraq and this six month deployment to Fort Riley, I've been gone from home a lot. Still my family is proud of me and understands the importance of the work I do," he said. Although he has been gone from home a lot he is still determined to support the war effort.

"I have volunteered to go back to Iraq on a MiTT team," Shindel said. He plans on going after the Dagger Brigade's mission at Fort Riley draws to a close in December 2006. "My job with the brigade largely depends on the battlefield experience that I have. The longer I am away from Iraq the more it affects my ability to be an effective trainer and prepare MiTT teams for what is going on in Iraq," he said firmly.

Sincere in his intent to return Shindel said, "The Iraqi people are learning what freedom is about and why they need to fight for it. We are making a difference over there and I want to continue to be part of that effort."



Master Sgt. David Shindel assist with MiTT training in the simulated village of Al Ahmir at Fort Riley.



## **“Dagger” Brigade look back on a successful training year**

Article By SGT Zachary Shumway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

FORT RILEY, KS - Over the past several months Soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division, known as the “Dagger” Brigade, have been working diligently with Fort Riley to set up the Military Transition Team mission here. As their role in the mission draws to a close brigade officials say they are leaving behind a solid foundation to train American forces and have set up a successful platform for the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division to take over later this fall.

According to brigade officials, the Dagger Brigade was initially selected by senior Army leadership to set up the Fort Riley Training Mission because of its successful record of MiTT training missions over the past three years.

During the initial set up of the MiTT mission, the Dagger Brigade immediately recognized that Fort Riley’s size and training facilities meant that they could expand training in new directions to better prepare Soldiers for conditions they may face in Iraq.

One of the ways the brigade increased the combat realism of MiTT training was to construct six new training areas, known as “urban clusters”. Urban clusters are simulated Iraqi villages that are designed to enhance the Soldiers’ ability to react and fight in urban combat conditions.

The additional training space allowed the Dagger Brigade to expand training in new directions. This expansion meant the brigade would have to expand the existing training model. Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class George Tillman, one of the Dagger Brigade’s operations NCOs said the initial number of days the brigade had dedicated to this course was 30 days. “We wanted to add a greater sense of theater immersion training to provide the Soldiers we train with the best knowledge possible before we send them overseas,” he said. To accommodate the new training, the course was expanded to a 60 day training model.

According to Tillman, MiTT training is designed to “train the trainers to train the trainers.” One way to accomplish this is to actually have the MiTT Soldiers train a group of Soldiers acting as Iraqi Security Forces. The brigade had previously provided training for Soldiers on how to react to civilians on the battlefield. In the new training model, Soldiers are not only taught to react to the civilians, but to interact with and advise the ISF as well.

“What we taught at Fort Carson was ‘here is your weapon and here is how you fire it,’ but here we are teaching ‘here is your weapon and here is how to fight with it, now go teach someone else how to fire it,’” Tillman said.

Tillman said another improvement to the course was the addition of language lab training. Fort Riley’s Operation section and security managers worked together with the Dagger Brigade to design a course that gives MiTT Soldiers a better understanding of the Iraqi language and culture. Cultural awareness allows American Soldiers to form a better bond with their Iraqi counterpart unit. The language lab is staffed by Iraqi Nationals who work for the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California.

The expansion of the training cycle also allow more time for Soldiers to be trained in Combat Lifesaving Skills. The new cycle increases the number of days MiTT Soldiers spend training in CLS from three to four. According to Tillman, the enhanced CLS training teaches additional advanced lifesaving techniques and allows Soldiers to better accomplish CLS certification. The additional training day features a situation training exercise designed to place Soldiers in a combat environment. Here, the Soldiers must react to enemy fire, evaluate and treat casualties, call for fire support and arrange for medical evacuation all at the same time.

One of the most unique Dagger Brigade training aides added to MiTT training is the Improvised Explosive Device training facility. The facility is set up in a museum like setting where Soldiers can walk through and view model IEDs which are currently being used against them in theater and learn how to react to them.

Tillman said another major improvement in MiTT instruction is the weapons training time the Soldiers can receive. “When we expanded the training to the 60 day model we added a day of training on each weapon system the Army offers instead of combining all weapons in one or two days.”

To ensure the MiTT Soldiers are prepared for their mission the brigade also added a Situation Training Exercise which tests the teams on what they can expect in theater. “At the end of the MiTT training cycle the brigade added a four day capstone exercise designed to test the Soldiers on how well they retained what they were taught and

how well they trained their Iraqi counterparts,” Tillman said. The STX includes mock IED attacks, convoy operations and urban assault situations.

Although the Dagger Brigade has already significantly improved the training model Tillman predicts there will be more changes in the future. “The training model will continue to be updated as the situation in theater dictates,” Tillman said, adding, “We want to send the best trained, best prepared Soldiers to theater as possible.”

As the hand over of training authority for the MiTT mission transfers from the Dagger Brigade to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division brigade officials say that they believe they have “set up a training model that will be a successful platform to train all future foreign forces.”



“Dagger” Soldiers provide tough realistic, hands-on, theatre immersion training to Transition Team members





## “Dagger” Brigade Re-patches to Div West

By Staff Sgt. Lisa Litchfield, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division Public Affairs Office

“Today marks a historic occasion. We are at a historic site to be able to do it.” With those words, Col. Raymond Lamb, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 91<sup>st</sup> Division (Training Support), began the brigade’s re-flagging ceremony.

High on the hill beside the Roosevelt monument at Camp Funston, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde., 91<sup>st</sup> Div. (TS) Commanders and Sergeants Major stood in formation with their color bearers and prepared to end one segment of history and begin another.

During the ceremony, Lamb spoke of the proud history of the brigade but noted that it was now a day for change. “For the longest time now, this brigade has worn the 91<sup>st</sup> Division patch. We are now changing to the First Army patch. It’s significant. We are modularizing, we are transforming just like the rest of the Army,” he said.

Although the Brigade has changed their patch, they don’t expect to change the way they train. The Brigade is known as “Dagger” Brigade and their charge is to “Sharpen the Edge”. According to Lamb, it is a particularly fitting motto as they train officers and senior non-commissioned officers for transition teams. “These Soldiers come to us as knives already. What we are doing is re-sharpening that edge that they can go in and make a difference.”

He continued by saying the contribution to the Global War on Terrorism by this brigade has been exceptional. “Soldiers that we are sending over to theater right now, small teams that they are, are having an impact and will have to have an impact in order for us to be successful in that war. What you’re doing is absolutely important, absolutely critical for the success of our nation and the world in making sure that those two areas of operation, Iraq and Afghanistan are where they should be to be able to preserve peace.”

To Lamb, there is no sense of loss in leaving 91<sup>st</sup> Division for Division West. He instead has a “sense of excitement” as the brigade transforms. He says, “Although the 91<sup>st</sup> Division and our structure up underneath the 91<sup>st</sup> Division is one that we grew up with and loved and were part of, it is also indicating that we are changing. We are keeping pace with the rest of the army, keeping relevant in what we do and how we provide training support to the reserve component forces as they are being called upon more and more to meet our national requirements in fighting the war on terrorism and other operations around the world.”

With the ceremony complete, new patches fixed on the sleeves of the uniform and Soldiers milling around congratulating each other, Lamb concluded by saying this day of change was “absolutely exciting.”



“For the longest time now, this brigade has worn the 91st Division patch. We are now changing to the First Army patch. It’s significant. We are modularizing, we are transforming just like the rest of the Army,” says Colonel Raymond L. Lamb, Brigade Commander of 2/91 Division. Photo by SGT Zachary Shumway



Colonel Raymond L. Lamb, Brigade Commander of 2/91 Division, replaces the 91st Division patch and replaces it with the First Army patch on CSM Ricky Buchanan Army Combat Uniform at the re-flagging ceremony on Fort Riley. Photo by SSG Lisa Litchfield